

Cat Loses Weight Despite Ravenous Appetite

CatChannel veterinary expert Arnold Plotnick, DVM, says cat could have hyperthyroidism or diabetes.

By Arnold Plotnick, DVM

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Q: My elderly cat is losing a lot of weight, drinking a lot, and seems hungry all the time. What do you think might be wrong?

A: You've given me the classic description of hyperthyroidism. Hyperthyroidism is a glandular condition in cats in which the thyroid gland in the neck produces too much thyroid hormone. This increases a cat's metabolism and causes the cat to lose weight. Cats with this condition will try to compensate by eating more food, but they often cannot keep pace, and will lose weight despite having a ravenous appetite.

Other clinical signs can be seen, such as vomiting, diarrhea, excessive thirst and urination, restlessness, panting and excessive vocalization. Hyperthyroidism is easily diagnosed via blood tests and is treatable. In fact, it is curable.

Second on my list would be diabetes. The four classic signs of diabetes are excessive thirst, excessive urination, very good appetite and weight loss. Diabetes usually occurs in middle-aged cats, although it also is seen in geriatric cats. Diabetes is diagnosed easily. You should have your veterinarian perform a complete blood count, chemistry panel, thyroid test and urinalysis. I feel confident your question will be definitively answered once the results are in.